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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 USNATO 000637

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SUBJECT: NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL READOUT - DECEMBER 12, 2007

REF: SECSTATE 152286

Classified By: DCM Richard G. Olson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) This cable is being retransmitted due to an error in the ref tel number.

¶2. (C/NF) Summary from the NAC Meeting:

-- Afghanistan: Ambassadors congratulated ISAF for excellent military and media coordination on Operation MAR KARARDAD in Musa Qala, but expressed concern that follow-up efforts to hold Musa Qala are implemented across the civil-military spectrum. Ambassador Nuland briefed Allies on Secretary Gates' congressional testimony, U.S. redlines on reconciliation, the Pakmil's effort in the NWFP, and another successful Afghan-DEA CN law enforcement operation carried off with support from U.S. ISAF forces in RC-East.

-- Balkans: DSYG Bisogneiro mentioned the unrest in Gorazdec last week, which demonstrated tensions remain high in Kosovo in the wake of the Troika report and in advance of the December 19 UNSC discussions. CMC Henault reported that formal military planning is going on two tracks, for all contingencies and for Ahtisaari tasks assigned to NATO.

-- Darfur: The CMC said NATO soon will complete rotation of AU troops into and out of Darfur.

-- Iraq: The CMC reported that Italian Carabinieri working

for NTM-I continue to provide Gendarmerie-type training to the Iraqi National Police. An assessment provided by the NATO Military Advisory and Liaison Team (MALT) indicated that the Iraqi battalion providing security at the NTM-I facility at Ar Rustamiyah is able to perform basic tasks adequately, but leadership at squad and platoon level is inadequate.

-- 2008 Budget Estimates for the International Staff:
Following a briefing by the Civil Budget Committee Chair and discussion among its members, the NAC noted the CBC report (C-M(2007)0116) and approved the 2008 civil budget.

-- AOB: The DSYG stated that the Russian MFA website had posted a comment on CFE, and suggested posting a response on NATO's website. The NAC approved the Individually Tailored Package for Japan, in time for the SYG to inform Japanese officials during his trip to Japan. Ambassador Nuland reported that U.S. and Russia Missile Defense experts will meet December 14 in Budapest, and the Slovakian PermRep reported that Bratislava approved doubling the Slovak ISAF contribution and a contribution to KFOR.

END SUMMARY.

Afghanistan

13. (C/NF) CMC Henault commended ISAF for the military planning and execution that resulted in the retaking of Musa Qala district center after many months of Taliban control,

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with an Afghan face on the operation (Operation MAR KARARDAD), and great care taken to avoid collateral damage. He praised the media planning that has thus far resulted in fair and balanced media coverage of the operations, with the Afghans in front of cameras and microphones. He also highlighted the role of new ISAF spokesman, Portuguese Brigadier General Carlos Branco, as particularly noteworthy (Comment: Allies, led by the U.S. and Denmark, had long advocated for a single, flag officer spokesman for the ISAF mission, which the Portuguese filled as a voluntary contribution. End comment.)

14. (C/NF) IMS AD for Operations MG Li Gobbi pointed to the Pakistani military's ongoing operations, highlighting Operation MOUNTAIN VIPER in the North West Frontier Province, which aims to rid the Swat valley of militants by year's end, and asserting that these operations (along with weather) have played a role in bringing cross-border attacks in Afghanistan during November to their lowest level since March 2006 (to include November 2006). His operational brief focused on RC-South, where Operation MAR KARARDAD had succeeded in retaking the district center of Musa Qala, and driving the Opposing Militant Forces (OMF) from the district. The operation began on November 28 with a shaping phase designed to disrupt OMF movement and maneuver capability into, out of, and around Musa Qala, with the decisive phase of the operations launching on December 7. (Note: PermReps were notified prior to the launching of the decisive phase. End note.) Li Gobbi acknowledged the need for non-kinetic follow-up: Afghan-led reconciliation, civ-mil engagement, and reconstruction and development. He reported that military operations had thus far been successful, with strong cooperation between U.S. and UK ISAF forces, OEF, and the Afghan army (201st and 205th Corps). The ANA ultimately led the way into the district center, placing an Afghan face squarely on the operation. Li Gobbi stated that though NATO did not yet know concretely the movements of OMF that had escaped Musa Qala, the working assumption of the intelligence branch was that OMF would move toward the tri-borders area of Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan, and Gulestan in Farah province.

15. (C/NF) NATO Senior Civilian Representative Everts, in his

last NAC brief by VTC from Kabul, commented further on Musa Qala. He added that Afghans view the victory in Musa Qala as significant, and have taken pride in this first major Afghan-led military accomplishment. He mentioned the strategic and political importance of Musa Qala, which had developed into the de facto Taliban capital of Helmand province, and a major node of drug production and trafficking. Everts stated that key question was "what next?" He noted that planning by the Afghan government and international community appeared sound, but the jury was still out on execution. President Karzai had sent Independent Directorate of Local Governance head Popal, a Vice Minister for police from the MOI, and the Deputy of the NDS to Musa Qala for follow-on direction. Everts said the international community has planned follow-on civilian efforts to the greatest degree he had yet seen in Kabul.

¶6. (C/NF) SCR Everts then turned to reconciliation and

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planning for Afghan elections. He urged the Council to discreetly support Karzai's efforts outside the Strengthening the Peace (PTS) reconciliation program, as well as to support an enhancement of the PTS program. On elections support, he highlighted the need for the international community to begin planning quickly. He focused on the massive challenge of voter registration, and the need for funds and people to carry out the task. Belgium probed further on this topic in the follow-on discussion, and Everts said that voter registration must start no later than summer 2008, and that the myriad security challenges would need to be addressed, as well.

¶7. (C/NF) SCR Everts also reported that in a bold move Attorney General Sabit had recently indicted Deputy MOI for Counternarcotics Daud, and commented that the aftermath would provide insight into Afghan politics. Daud was well connected, Everts stated, and this indictment could well lead to Sabit's downfall. Alternatively, it could show the government's mettle with regard to rule of law.

¶8. (C/NF) Responding to questions from the Dutch PermRep, Everts reasserted his views that PRTs must not become static entities, but rather adjust their civil and military composition as Afghan local governance makes strides, as PRTs are an instrument to use under pressing security conditions. Everts suggested nations take a close look at PRTs in the north and west, and highlighted that a shift from those more stable areas could enable PRTs to be fielded in places like Dai Kundi, where the need is great.

¶9. (C/NF) Ambassador Nuland, Canada, Germany, and Romania asked about follow-on planning for holding Musa Qala now that the clearing operations seemed to have been successful. While stressing the challenge in Musa Qala was not over, Ambassador Nuland also praised the cooperation between the ANA, ISAF, and OEF, and the manner in which the Afghans had been given a leading role in public diplomacy, and asked what sort of quick impact funding was being put to use. She again laid down U.S. redlines on the reconciliation of OMF with the Afghan government, drawing on reftel. The Ambassador pointed to strong Pakistani efforts in Swat, noting that the Pakmil was conducting large-scale, politically-sensitive operations at a politically difficult time for them, and asking that PermReps make their capitals aware of this. She directed Allies to the House Armed Services Committee testimony of SecDef Gates and ADM Mullen, highlighting SecDef's cautious optimism, but stressing the significance of his tough comments on NATO. Finally, she highlighted for Allies a late-November Afghan-led, DEA-supported operation that resulted in the arrest of a significant drug trafficker allied with the Taliban in Nangarhar. This operation was supported by U.S. ISAF forces, she stated, and reminded Allies that the security and rule of law benefits these operations bring are intertwined with the overall security and stability that ISAF seeks to establish.

¶10. (C/NF) Bulgaria reported that 43 tons of mortars and ammunition destined for the ANA had left Sofia on December 11, and that Bulgaria was still seeking arrangements to ship a remaining 450 tons of the equipment. Poland asked if the

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successful ANA/ISAF/OEF cooperation and media coordination behind Operation MAR KARARDAD could be replicated elsewhere in Afghanistan. In response to the Polish question, SCR Everts pointed to the groundbreaking work occurring in RC-East on bringing civilian and military assets jointly to bear, facilitated by quick impact project monies, and said that in fact, an earlier operation in central Paktika, Operation ATTAL, had actually served as a model in planning MAR KARARDAD.

Balkans

¶11. (C/NF) DSYG Bisogneiro reported unrest in Gorazdec last week, which showed tensions remain high in Kosovo in the wake of the Troika report and in advance of the December 19 UNSC discussions. He added that the task coming out of this week's PermReps lunch -- planning for "new tasks" assigned to NATO under the Ahtisaari process -- is ongoing and a draft tasker will be circulated this week.

¶12. (C/NF) Ambassador Nuland responded that the unrest in Gorazdec last week appears to have been the work of a few Serb trouble-makers, but the incident was amplified because it was covered on CNN and YouTube. This event underscored the importance of KFOR having a rapid PD capability to respond quickly to such events, she said. CMC Henault undertook to check with KFOR and JFC Naples on their capabilities in this area.

¶13. (C/NF) The Slovenian PermRep asked whether KFOR or Kosovo police responded to the Gorazdec incident and CMC Henault responded that it should have been KFOR since the town is a Serb enclave, but undertook to confirm this.

Darfur

¶14. (C/NF) The CMC reported that NATO would soon complete the rotation of AU troops into and out of Darfur. The NATO-sponsored rotation of the final Nigerian battalion was due to be completed Wednesday, four days ahead of schedule. The EU-supported rotation of Senegalese and Gambian personnel was still scheduled for December 17-30 and would mark the conclusion of the combined NATO-EU support to the AMIS Autumn 2007 rotation.

Iraq

¶15. (C/NF) The CMC said that Italian Carabinieri working for NTM-I continue to provide Gendarmerie-type training to the Iraqi National Police. There are currently 433 Iraqi police officers in the program. He added that the NATO Military Advisory and Liaison Team (MALT) provided an assessment of the Iraqi Base Defence Battalion (BDB) trained at NTM-I at Ar Rustamiyah. According to the assessment, individual soldiers are able to perform tasks properly, but leadership at squad

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and platoon level is inadequate. The MALT team is now conducting a series of exercises focused on leadership.

¶16. (U) The Civil Budget Committee Chair briefed the NAC on the 2008 civil budget. A budget envelope of EUR 191.4 million was agreed in September 2007, along with political priorities, under the 2008 - 2012 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The MTFP included a budget increase of 1.9 percent, based on projected inflation. The MTFP was agreed before the Coordinating Committee on Remuneration (CCR) issued its salary adjustment recommendation for 2008. The CCR recommendation was only 1.1 percent, resulting in a EUR 800,000 bubble, over what some nations considered appropriate in keeping with zero real growth principles. In a compromise with those nations, the EUR 800,000 was "frozen" within the budget to be used exclusively for strengthening the SCR Office in Kabul. If EUR 800,000 is not needed for the SCR office, credits will lapse (i.e. return to nations). If more than EUR 800,000 is needed, it will have to come from reprioritization of current budgetary needs.

¶17. (U) PermReps noted the CBC report and approved the 2008 budget, with an envelope of EUR 191.4 million. Seven nations commented on the CBC report/presentation: Italy, Poland, France, UK, Canada, Romania and Hungary. Poland, Romania, and Hungary agreed with the report, but expressed concerns about decreases in funding for public diplomacy activities in Russia and the Ukraine. The Romanians added that while NATO currently lives in a zero real growth (ZRG) environment, it -- like any organization -- can only continue doing more without more resources for so long. At some future point, the question of additional resources should be discussed. France, UK and Canada spoke most strongly in favor of ZRG and the need to reprioritize funding to meet NATO's most important objectives. Canada reminded nations that all agreed in the recent Foreign Ministers communique that Afghanistan is the highest priority. Therefore, the strengthening of the SCR Office in Kabul should get the funding it needs.

¶18. (U) The CBC Chair raised several problems facing the CBC: (1) not all nations agree on the definition of zero real growth, thus the Committee will take this up as a topic for discussion in the new year -- to come up with a commonly agreed definition; (2) situational changes -- as political priorities change, the budget process must be nimble enough to adapt; (3) timely publication of budget documents -- the Committee will work to improve the timeliness of its documents, though the Chair noted that this is the first time in recent years that an agreed budget came before the NAC in its last meeting before the Christmas break; and (4) financial impact of new priorities -- the chair agreed with some delegations that as new initiatives are discussed in other committees, the CBC should discuss the financial impact of these initiatives in parallel.

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AOB

¶19. (C/NF) The DSYG mentioned that the Russian MFA website had posted a comment on CFE. With the HLTF meeting Wednesday, the DSYG suggested they agree on a response to the Russian comment that can be posted on NATO's website.

¶20. (C/NF) The DSYG said that the EAPC would meet Wednesday and he would like it to approve CD(2007)0022 regarding a tasking to the Military Committee on how best to meet the objectives of UNSCR 1325 on women's issues. The Turkish PermRep said he would not object to having the EAPC discuss the matter today, but in the future such approvals must be made in the NAC before going to the EAPC. Ambassador Nuland suggested getting NAC approval at that moment, which was duly done.

¶21. (C/NF) The DSYG, stating that the SYG was in Tokyo that day, asked for NAC approval of the Individually Tailored Cooperation Program for Japan. The NAC approved the Program.

¶22. (C/NF) Ambassador Nuland reported that the U.S. and Russia Missile Defense experts would meet Friday in Budapest.

¶23. (C/NF) The Slovakian PermRep reported that Bratislava yesterday approved doubling the Slovak ISAF contribution, including units going to RC-South. Bratislava also approved a contribution to KFOR, including two MI-17 helicopters.
NULAND